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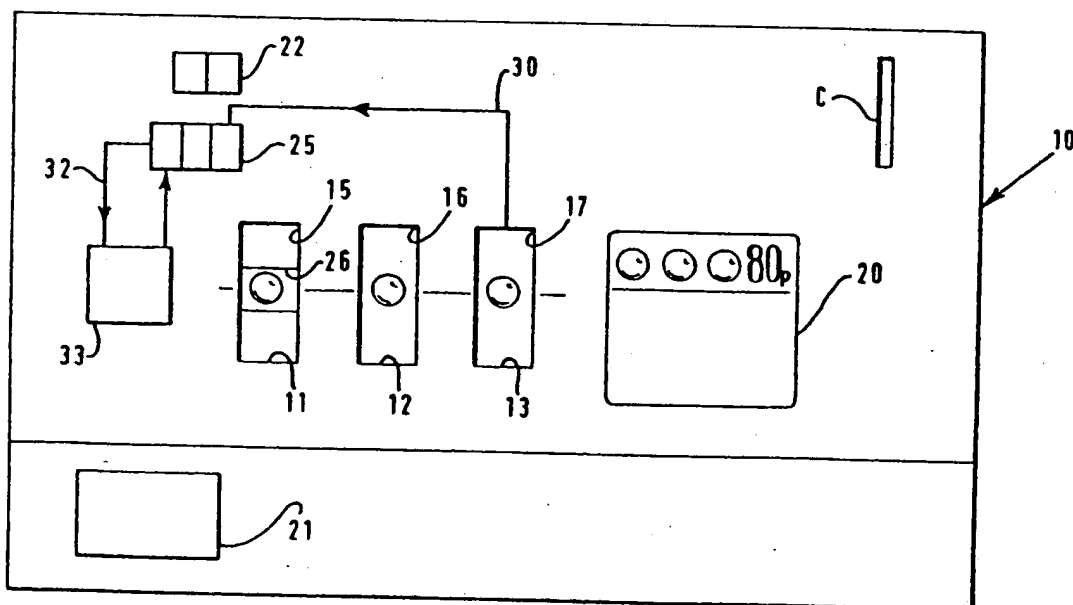
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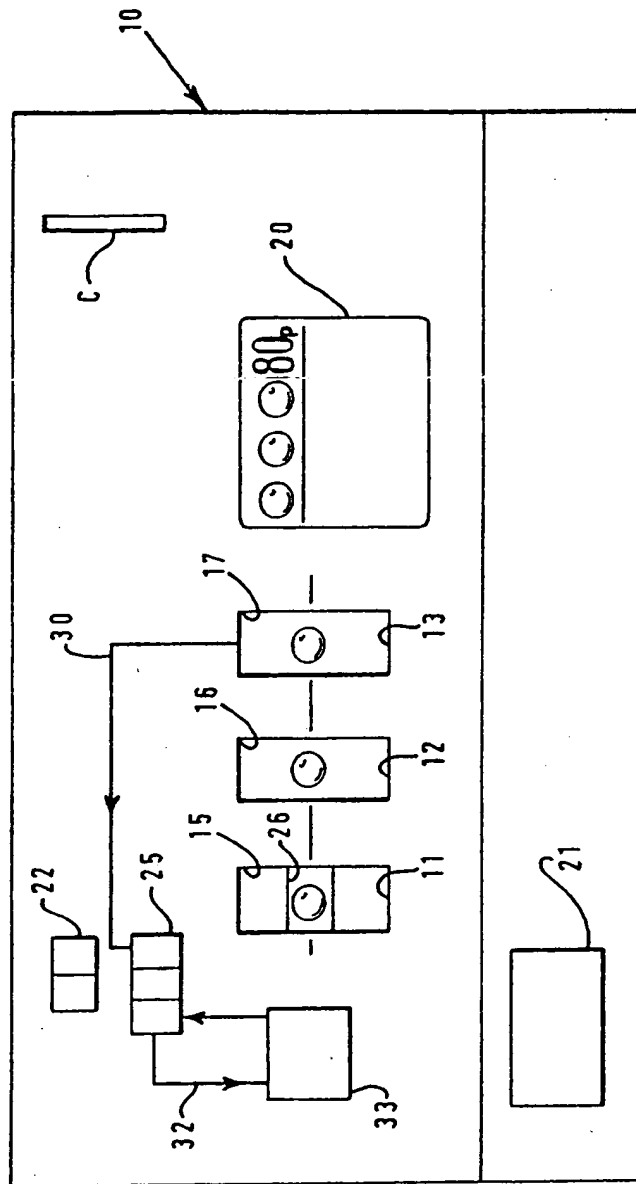
(54) Gaming machine

(57) A gaming machine of the kind commonly known as a fruit machine, which at the end of a play initiated by operation of a starting means (21) by a player, a random combination of symbols, one from each of two or more groups of different symbols is indicated (11, 12, 13), winnings being credited and/or paid out to the player in the event of the indicated combination of symbols being any one of a number of predetermined winning combinations, in which all or a proportion of a player's winnings for each of a predetermined number of plays, can be credited rather than paid out immediately a winning combination is obtained, wherein upon a predetermined or randomly selected winning combination being obtained, a proportion of the credited winnings is added to or subtracted from the credited winnings.



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SPECIFICATION

Gaming machine

5 This invention relates to a gaming machine of the kind commonly known as a fruit machine, which at the end of a play initiated by operation of a starting means by a player, a random combination of symbols, one from each of two or more groups of different symbols is indicated, winnings being credited and/or paid out to the player in the event of the indicated combination of symbols being any one of a number of predetermined winning combinations, the starting means being either coin operated so that a play is started on the insertion of a correct denomination or coins (which term includes money tokens) or the machine may have a coin-free means adapted on insertion of a correct denomination coin or coins to render the starting means operative, a play then being started when the player operates a push button or handle.

More particularly, the invention relates to a gaming machine in which all or a proportion of a player's winnings for each of a predetermined number of plays, can be credited rather than paid out immediately a winning combination is obtained. The machine may display the total winnings credited for the predetermined number of previous plays. Such a gaming machine will hereinafter be referred to as being "of the kind specified".

It will be appreciated that the machine may display the actual winnings in figures, e.g. 30p, or may give another indication of the player's winnings, such as displaying points equivalent to the monetary winnings, or any other type of display.

40 The invention has been devised primarily but not exclusively in connection with a gaming machine of the kind specified in which two or more groups of symbols are carried by the peripheries of a corresponding number of rotary drums or reels, the drums or reels being rotated on operation of the starting means and being arrested in random positions at the end of the game, so that a random combination of symbols is displayed through a window or windows in the housing of the machine.

However, the invention is also applicable to a gaming machine of the kind specified in which the symbols are projected onto a screen, or to a machine wherein the groups of symbols are displayed by a display panel and during a game, lamps disposed behind the respective symbols of each group are illuminated in sequence, a random combination of symbols remaining illuminated at the end of the game.

The object of the present invention is to provide a new or improved gaming machine of the kind specified.

65 According to the invention, we provide a

gaming machine of the kind wherein upon a predetermined or randomly selected winning combination being obtained, a proportion of the credited winnings is added to or subtracted from the credited winnings.

70 Thus a player has the opportunity of increasing or decreasing his credited winnings.

In one embodiment, the proportion of the credited winnings is added or subtracted upon the appearance of a special symbol present on one or more of the symbols in any winning combination of symbols in which case operation of the feature is predetermined. Where more than one special symbol is provided, for example one special symbol for each group of symbols, upon the appearance of two such special symbols in a winning combination of symbols, a different proportion of the credited winnings may be added to or subtracted from the credited winnings.

85 In an alternative embodiment, the proportion of credited winnings may be added or subtracted upon one or more randomly selected winning combinations being obtained.

90 The proportion of credited winnings may be a fixed proportion, for example $\pm 50\%$ of the credited winnings, or the proportion of credited winnings may be determined at random, or depending on the exact winning combination obtained.

95 Preferably, all of a player's winnings for a predetermined number of plays are credited rather than immediately being paid out, although if desired, a proportion of a player's winnings may be credited automatically, the remainder being paid out. Further alternatively, when a winning combination is obtained, a player may be given a short time to decide whether to credit any, and if so what proportion of, his winnings for each winning game, at the end of which time if the player has not taken the necessary action, the machine may be arranged to pay out all of the winnings from that win, or credit all of the winnings from that win as desired.

100 The machine may be provided with a nudge and/or hold after win feature to further increase the chances of the player obtaining a winning combination.

115 The invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawing which is a diagrammatic view of a gaming machine in accordance with the invention.

Referring to the drawing, a gaming machine 120 has three reels 11, 12 and 13, on the peripheries of which are marked a series of symbols, in the present case symbols depicting fruit such as berries, oranges etc., although any other symbols could be provided.

125 Upon operation of a start mechanism, the reels 11, 12 and 13 spin so as to bring different portions of their peripheries and hence different symbols into view through a window 15, 16, 17 respectively, and a stop mechanism stops the reels at random so that

one symbol from each reel 11, 12, 13 is displayed through its respective window.

Upon predetermined combinations of symbols being displayed, (hereinafter called "winning combinations"), the machine 10 will credit winnings, (hereinafter called "fruit winnings"), to the player, the amount of which will depend on the exact winning combination of symbols attained.

Such machines are commonly known as fruit machines, and the drawings are only intended to diagrammatically represent a typical layout of machine, it being apparent to those skilled in the art that many variations of layout are possible.

Further, although rotatable reels 11, 12, 13 have been described, any other means of bringing different combinations of symbols into view could be used. For example, symbols could be projected onto a screen from an electronic rather than mechanical arrangement. Further, more than three reels or groups of symbols may be used if required, or only two.

In the machine described, a panel 20 is provided to indicate all the possible winning combinations of symbols (although only one is shown), and the amount of the fruit winnings which will be credited if a particular combination is obtained.

The machine 10 is coin-freed, that is to say that upon insertion of a correct denomination coin or coins into a slot C (which term includes money tokens) the start mechanism is operable by means of a start button 21 and the number of plays of the machine for which coins have been inserted, i.e. the number of plays bought, is indicated on a display 22. After each play, the number of plays remaining for the value of coins originally inserted will be reduced, and hence the number of plays indicated by display 22 will be reduced. Of course, the exact monetary value of coins credited could alternatively be displayed which would decrease after each play. Alternatively, the machine could be coin operated, that is to say the start mechanism would operate automatically upon insertion of a correct denomination coin or sufficient coins. Such mechanisms are well known to those skilled in the art and hence further description is not considered necessary.

Also provided is a winnings indicator 25 to indicate the amount of winnings obtained by the player during a game, i.e. over a predetermined number of plays.

Thus the player is credited and may collect his winnings only at the end of a game, i.e. when all the available plays indicated by display 22 have been used up so that the display 22 indicates zero.

Certain symbols on each reel 11 to 13 have an additional special marking, such as shown at 26 on reel 11. Thus during play, upon a winning combination being obtained, the

combination may or may not include a symbol with such a special marking 26. Upon a winning combination being obtained and such a special marking occurring in the combination on any of the three reels, the machine operates as follows.

In the drawing, it is assumed that the player has zero credited winning indicated by display 25, but has just obtained a winning combination of symbols, for example three oranges for which the fruit win is 80p as indicated on panel 20. The fruit winnings are credited to the player by a sensing mechanism of the machine 10 sending a signal to indicator 25 along a line 30. However, a signal is also sent along a line 32 from display 25 to a calculating means 33 which calculates a fixed percentage of the total credited winnings, for example 50%, i.e. 40p. This amount is then added to the player's winnings, so that the total credited winnings is now £1.20.

Upon subsequent plays, if a special marking, such as marking 26, again occurs in a winning combination obtained by the player the calculating means would calculate a proportion of the total credited winnings, i.e. £1.20 plus the fruit win for that game, and add that to the credited winnings.

If desired, if two or three special markings 26 appear in a winning combination, the calculating means 33 may be arranged to add 100% or another different fixed percentage, of the credited winnings.

At the end of play, i.e. when the player has no remaining credits displayed in display 22, the machine may pay out the total credited winnings indicated by display 25.

The calculating means 33, starting mechanism and stopping mechanism is preferably part of an electronic control means which controls the operation of the machine.

The machine described with reference to the drawing may have additional features, such as a nudge feature which operates at random and is commonly provided on many machines to enable one or more of the reels 11, 12, 13 to be nudged after the reels have been stopped to bring the next symbol into view, and/or a hold feature which operates at random so that one or more of the reels 11, 12, 13 may be held whilst the remaining reel or reels is/are spun during a subsequent play, in both cases to increase the player's chances of obtaining a winning combination.

It will be appreciated that where a hold feature is provided, this could significantly increase a player's chance of increasing his credited winnings.

A special feature may be provided so that if for example two or more special markings 26 occur in a winning combination, all three reels 11, 12, 13 may be held if a winning combination is achieved.

Various modifications may be made to the machine described without departing from the

scope of the invention. For example, instead of a fixed percentage of credited winnings being added to the player's credited winnings, a fixed percentage of the credited winnings may be subtracted when a special marking appears in a winning combination. Where more than one special marking 26 is provided, the appearance of one marking in a winning combination may cause a fixed percentage of the credited winnings to be added, whilst the appearance of another special marking 26 causes a fixed percentage of the credited winnings to be subtracted. Where both special markings appear in a winning combination, the total credited winnings may be arranged to remain unchanged.

Instead of a fixed percentage of credited winnings being added or subtracted, if desired a variable proportion of the total credited winnings may be added or subtracted. For example, different special markings may arrange for different proportions to be added or subtracted, or the proportion of the credited winnings may be determined randomly by the machine, or may depend upon the exact winning combination of symbols obtained.

In the machine 10 described, all of a player's fruit winnings are credited as indicated by indicator 25, but in another machine, only a proportion of his fruit winnings may be credited, the remainder being immediately paid out. In a further alternative, the machine may give a short time period, for example three seconds, in which the player can choose whether or not to credit any, and if so what proportion, of his fruit winnings, the remainder, if any, being paid out immediately.

Although as described a proportion of the credited winnings are added to or subtracted from the total credited winnings upon the appearance of one or more special markings on the reels 11, 12, 13, if desired, no such special markings may be provided, in which case upon randomly selected winnings may be added to or subtracted.

As described, a player's fruit win is credited before the proportion of the credited winning is calculated. In another arrangement, the proportion of credited winnings may be calculated before the fruit winnings of that play are credited, so that if a special marking appears in a winning combination where there is zero credited winnings, the proportion of winnings credited or subtracted would be zero so that there would be no change.

CLAIMS

1. A gaming machine of the kind specified wherein upon a predetermined or randomly selected winning combination being obtained, a proportion of the credited winnings is added to or subtracted from the credited winnings.

2. A machine according to Claim 1 wherein the proportion of the credited winnings is added or subtracted upon the appearance of a special symbol present on one or more of the symbols in any winning combination of symbols.

3. A machine according to Claim 2 wherein more than one special symbol is provided.

4. A machine according to Claim 1 wherein the proportion of credited winnings may be added or subtracted upon one or more randomly selected winning combinations being obtained.

5. A gaming machine according to any one of Claims 1 to 4 wherein the proportion of credited winnings is a fixed proportion of the credited winnings.

6. A machine according to any one of Claims 1 to 4 wherein the proportion of credited winnings is determined at random, or depending on the winning combination obtained.

7. A machine according to any one of Claims 1 to 6 wherein all of a player's winnings for a predetermined number of plays are credited rather than immediately being paid out.

8. A machine according to any one of Claims 1 to 6 wherein a proportion of a player's winnings for a predetermined number of plays are credited automatically, the remainder being paid out.

9. A machine according to any one of Claims 1 to 6 wherein when a winning combination is obtained, a player is given a short time to decide whether to credit any, and if so what proportion of, his winnings for each winning game, at the end of which time if the player has not taken the necessary action, the machine is arranged to pay out all of the winnings from that win, or credit all of the winnings from that win.

10. A machine according to any one of Claims 1 to 9 wherein the machine is provided with a nudge and/or hold after win feature.

11. A gaming machine substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to and as shown in the accompanying drawings.

12. Any novel feature or novel combination of features disclosed herein and/or as shown in the accompanying drawings.